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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [SW](#)

SUBJECT: SKIRMISH, SWEDES KILL THREE EXTREMISTS IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: CDA ROBERT SILVERMAN, 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) On July 23 at 2100 local time, Swedish troops came under fire in the Balkh district, three kilometers west of Mazar-e-Sharif, according to press and MFA sources. According to the Swedish Armed Forces, the attack on the Swedish rifle unit continued during the night. Reinforcements were dispatched to the area, including a Swedish Combat Vehicle 90, Finnish troops and a medical unit. At dawn, the Swedish and Finnish units secured the area and discovered three dead and two wounded extremists. The two wounded were sent to the German Camp Marmal for medical care.

¶2. (C) MOD Director for International Security Policy Peter Gothe told Pol Counselor July 23 that violence in northern Afghanistan has been increasing for the past two years, to the point that there are now weekly shootings in the areas of Sweden's PRT. Before, the violence was mostly the related to criminal activity, but more Taliban elements are involved now. He stated that the Norwegians last year started engaging in heavy fighting and Swedish have been "backfilling" Norwegian positions since then. Last year, Taliban activity was noted only in Pashtun pockets in northern Afghanistan, he stated. Now, Sweden sees a clear increase in Taliban activity across the region.

¶3. (U) Press reports, which MOD sources told us were largely accurate, suggest violence has doubled since last year. In the last 12 weeks, there have been eight attacks in the Swedish PRT region, compared to seven in total last year:

-- On April 10, Swedish troops and Afghani police were fired upon in Chahar Bulak. One police officer was killed, and two Swedes were injured.

-- On April 17, a suicide bomber attacked an ISAF convoy on the main road seven kilometers west of Mazar-e-Sharif. A Norwegian captain was killed.

-- On April 23, automatic rifle and a rocket launcher fire hit a Swedish four-vehicle convoy in Chabar Bulak. Several vehicles were hit, but there were no casualties.

-- On June 18, a remote-controlled bomb hidden in bags on a bicycle exploded in Shebergan. The bomb was aimed at a convoy with Swedish and Finnish vehicles. One Finnish vehicle was hit.

-- On June 30, 35 Taliban armed with machineguns and grenade launchers attacked Swedish troops, and Afghan police and military in Darzab. The Swedes called in the U.S. Air Force. One Taliban fighter was killed.

-- On July 3, a Finnish patrol almost was hit by a suicide bomber 20 kilometers east from Mazar-i-Sharif. The bomb exploded prematurely and the perpetrator died; only his vehicle was damaged.

-- On July 11, a Swedish patrol was hit by automatic fire and rocket rifles 15 kilometers west of Mazar-i-Sharif. Vehicles were hit, but no one was wounded.

-- On July 22, a group of Swedish and Finnish troops was attacked in Sayyad in the south-western part of the PRT. The soldiers were fired upon rifles and automatic carbines when they approached a village. The gunmen moved away when the Swedish group took their battle positions; there were no casualties.

SILVERMAN